

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for producing and weighing a mailing unit that is formed
2 from a plurality of components including inserts and envelopes, the method comprising:
3 determining a weight for each of the components and electronically storing a
4 record of the weights;
5 placing the inserts into the envelope to form the mailing unit;
6 determining the weight of the mailing unit based on the weights of the
7 components utilized to form the mailing unit that are stored in the weight record.

1 2. A method as in claim 1, further comprising predetermining the
2 components to be used in the mailing unit, and wherein the weight determining step
3 comprises summing the weights of the components of the mailing unit prior to assembly of
4 the mailing unit.

1 3. A method as in claim 2, further comprising reading an identifier on one
2 of the inserts to determine the components of the mailing unit.

1 4. A method as in claim 1, wherein the weight determining step
2 comprises summing the weights of the components utilized to form the mailing unit as the
3 components are selected for inclusion in the mailing unit.

1 5. A method as in claim 4, further comprising reading an identifier on one
2 of the inserts to determine the components that are to be selected.

1 6. A method as in claim 5, wherein the summing step comprises summing
2 the weight of each component using a processor upon selection of each of the components.

1 7. A method as in claim 1, wherein the inserts are held in groups that are
2 disposed along a track, and further comprising selecting the inserts from their respective
3 groups and placing them onto the track.

1 8. A method as in claim 7, further comprising placing the inserts on the
2 track into the envelope.

1 9. A method as in claim 1, wherein one of the inserts comprises a
2 financial statement.

1 10. A method as in claim 1, wherein one of the inserts comprises a charge
2 card that is attached to a card carrier.

1 11. A method as in claim 1, wherein one of the inserts comprises a
2 financial statement and another one of the inserts comprises a charge card that is attached to a
3 card carrier.

1 12. A method as in claim 1, wherein the inserts are selected from a group
2 consisting of letters, advertisements, checks, PIN mailers, phone cards and maps.

1 13. A method as in claim 1, further comprising organizing the mailing
2 units based on a postage weight classification.

1 14. A method as in claim 13, further comprising marking and mailing units
2 that are different in weight than their classification.

1 15. A system for producing and weighing mailing units that are formed
2 from a plurality of components including inserts and envelopes, the system comprising:

3 a controller having a processor and a memory containing the weight of each of
4 the components;

5 a movable track;

6 a plurality of inserting locations that are adapted to hold the inserts, and a
7 plurality of inserting mechanisms that are adapted to place selective ones of the inserts onto
8 the track; and

9 a moving mechanism that is adapted to move the inserts from the track and
10 into an envelope to form a mailing unit;

11 wherein the controller is configured to determine the weight of the mailing
12 unit based on the weights of the components utilized to form the mailing unit that are stored
13 in the memory.

1 16. A system as in claim 15, further comprising an external storage device
2 having information on the weights to download to the controller.

1 17. A system as in claim 15, wherein one of the inserts is configured to
2 have an identifier, and wherein the system further includes a reader to read the identifier, and

3 wherein the controller is configured to determine the components of the mailing unit based on
4 the identifier.

1 18. A system as in claim 17, wherein the controller is configured to sum
2 the weights of the components of the mailing unit prior to assembly of the mailing unit.

1 19. A system as in claim 17, wherein the controller is configured to sum
2 the weights of the inserts utilized to form the mailing unit as the inserts are placed onto the
3 track.

1 20. A system as in claim 15, wherein the inserts are selected from a group
2 consisting of statements, card carriers, cards, and advertising information.

1 21. A system as in claim 15, further comprising a sorting mechanism to
2 sort the mailing units into groups based on their weights.

1 22. A system as in claim 21, further comprising a marking mechanism to
2 mark at least some of the mailing units based on their weights to classify the mailing units
3 within a given group.

1 23. A computer system for determining the weights of mailing units, the
2 system comprising:

3 a processor that is configured to send signals to and receive signals from a
4 mail processing machine;

5 a memory accessible by the processor, the memory having records containing
6 the weight of each of the components;

7 wherein the processor is configured to determine the weight of the mailing
8 unit based on the weights of the components utilized to form the mailing unit that are stored
9 in the memory.

1 24. A system as in claim 23, wherein the memory includes an identifier for
2 each of the mailing units, and wherein the processor is configured to determine the
3 components of each mailing unit based on an identifier received from a reader that reads the
4 identifier from one of the inserts.

1 25. A system as in claim 24, wherein the processor is configured to
2 determine the weight of the mailing unit based on the identifier prior to assembling the
3 mailing unit.

1 26. A system as in claim 24, wherein the processor is configured to
2 determine the weight of the mailing unit based on signals from the mail processing machine
3 indicating that the inserts have been selected for inclusion in the mailing unit.